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Security Council

Seventy-first year

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Wednesday, 23 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Minami
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rossselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/233)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/233)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Raymond Tshibanda N'tungamulongo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/233, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity personally to present to the Security Council the latest report (S/2016/233) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and to brief members on the latest developments on the ground.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a pivotal moment. Elections should be held towards the end of the year, while political tensions are rising as the polls approach. The electoral process has long been at an impasse, with significant obstacles to be overcome in order to hold the elections. A credible dialogue among all political stakeholders remains essential in order to find a solution to the situation in which the electoral process finds itself and to avoid an escalation of tension. The risk of violence for us is real, unless the political differences are resolved.

During his recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Secretary-General called on President Kabila, the Presidents of the two chambers of Parliament and members of the majority parties and civil society to engage constructively in a political dialogue that has the interests of the people at the centre. He highlighted the need to hold credible elections in line with the Constitution, with a view to consolidate the progress made in the country over the past decade. In that regard, we are working closely with the African Union and are supporting its efforts to facilitate a political dialogue with the support of regional and international partners.

Updating the voter rolls continues to be a key element in holding credible elections. Progress in that area will make it possible to lift one of the existing obstacles. The support of MONUSCO will be necessary in revising the voter lists. Nevertheless, to limit the risks involved in its involvement, securing political consensus beforehand is essential. That would contribute to overcoming numerous impediments and would mark a first, crucial step in the efforts aimed at ensuring the holding of credible elections.

(*spoke in English*)

Another key message conveyed by the Secretary-General during his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo was that of the importance of there being sufficient space for political activities and the exercise of public liberties for the credibility of any electoral process. Reports of increasing restriction of the democratic space, in particular with regard to members of the opposition, the media and civil society, are of concern.

As set out in the report before the Council, the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains highly complex, in particular in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, with the deterioration of the security situation in some areas. In the Beni area of North Kivu, the Allied Democratic Forces continue to carry out brutal attacks against civilians, the national security forces and MONUSCO. The Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

and the myriad Mayi-Mayi groups in North Kivu also remain a significant threat to civilians. I am concerned in particular about the situation in southern Lubero and Walikale territories, where fighting between newly emerged Mayi-Mayi groups and FDLR units has resulted in mass displacements of civilians and heightened tensions between local communities, with an increasing number of human rights violations over recent months. The rhetoric by some actors has become increasingly strong, and there is a real risk of escalation intercommunal conflict.

The spate of kidnappings in areas formerly occupied by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in Masisi and Ituri territories is indicative of a lack of effective State presence in conflict-affected areas. Inter-ethnic tensions in Ituri province, fuelled by conflicts over land, large-scale displacements owing to the situation in North Kivu, and other population movements have again raised the possibility of serious violence in this area. Recent reported returns for former M-23 combatants to Masisi territory and other parts of the Kivus serve to underscore the urgent need to implement the Nairobi Declarations.

The situation in part of South Kivu also remains fragile. In mid-February, Congolese security services discovered weapons caches in the Ruzizi Plain, near Uvira. The subsequent arrests of several Congolese and Burundians on charges related to the caches and participation in an insurrection movement, as well as the remobilization of an ethnic militia in Haut Plateau, are signs that the clashes in Burundi could destabilize South Kivu.

MONUSCO has intensified efforts to approach the protection of civilians and the neutralization of armed groups as mission-wide priorities, with an added focus on non-military initiatives, including strong political advocacy, enhanced reporting and effective liaison with communities. MONUSCO has also begun developing tailored strategies to address the threat posed by armed groups. The Mission continues to work closely with Special Envoy Djinnit's Office with a view to dealing better with the regional aspects.

I would like to highlight the importance of renewing the partnership between the Government and MONUSCO if such threats are to be addressed more effectively. Since my arrival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I have intensified my engagement with President Kabila himself, and he has indicated his willingness to enhance cooperation with MONUSCO and to re-engage in discussions on the joint development of an exit strategy for MONUSCO. President Kabila's commitment to renewing the coordination of military operations, which resulted in January in a technical agreement between the Government and MONUSCO and in the recent resumption of greater cooperation in planning operations, has paved the way for improved cooperation. That is important, as MONUSCO will be more effective if challenges can be addressed in a spirit of close cooperation with the Congolese authorities and of mutual trust and confidence.

Military cooperation offers a clear opportunity to significantly increase the military pressure on priority armed groups and protect civilians more effectively. The rate of surrender had risen in the past year, and that trend could continue in the coming months with a renewal of more coordinated military operations. A key priority for the coming year will be linking those efforts to a viable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process in order to ensure that the military pressure leads to an eventual path to reintegration or repatriation. It will also be important to support those operations by managing weapons and explosives effectively. All United Nations support will be provided in accordance with the human-rights due-diligence policy. MONUSCO has put in place robust mitigating measures to ensure that our operations are able to effectively target armed groups while reducing the risk of human-rights abuses. The recent violence at the Kitona demobilization camp, which left two dead and several wounded, is a reminder of the need for careful planning and coordinated support for the return and reintegration of the more than 5,000 ex-combatants now in the national DDR programme. Coordinating advocacy for that phase of the programme with partners such as the World Bank will be a priority in the coming period.

The planned resumption of coordinated operations between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO is an important part of a broader effort to renew and deepen our partnership with the Government, recognizing that a principled, transparent partnership is key to effective implementation of our mandate. MONUSCO and the Government took concrete steps in the context of the strategic dialogue aimed at developing an agreed exit strategy for MONUSCO, in line with resolution 2211 (2015) and taking into account the political and

security realities on the ground. MONUSCO and the Government are discussing a framework for the exit strategy, laying out a conditions-based approach for the Mission's further drawdown and eventual withdrawal. Working groups have been established to develop agreed-on criteria for measuring progress in that regard, and have already been working on that for the past 10 days or so.

The process of force transformation is critical to establishing the conditions that will enable the Mission's drawdown and eventual withdrawal. Conducted effectively, that process will ensure that MONUSCO exercises greater operational capability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, even as the force's overall numbers are gradually reduced. The core of the transformation is a more mobile and agile force based largely on the new rapid deployment battalions. The first of those arrived in the country last month and has already conducted rehearsal exercises. That approach, combined with increased aviation, surveillance and engineering capabilities, is designed to ensure enhanced responsiveness and the ability to implement a robust strategy for the protection of civilians in the coming period.

I would also like to take this opportunity to stress the priority I have personally made of fully implementing MONUSCO's zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse. The Mission has reviewed its overall strategy and introduced a new mechanism aimed at ensuring that such exploitation and abuse can be reported more easily, as well as a comprehensive network for responding to and assisting victims. Under my leadership, MONUSCO will take all possible steps to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, punish those responsible to the maximum extent possible and address the needs of victims and survivors.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight four issues for the Council to consider as it finalizes MONUSCO's new mandate.

First, we need a credible and meaningful political dialogue to overcome the impasse in the electoral process. A strong message on the need for political consensus and an agreed-on, sustainable way forward will be important, while at the same time emphasizing the link between a credible electoral process and support for fundamental human rights. It will also be particularly important to identify clear and realistic conditions under which the United Nations could support a revision of the voting registry, which we believe would help enhance the process's credibility and prevent the issue from becoming another obstacle to timely elections.

Secondly, I am optimistic that we can capitalize on the spirit of enhanced cooperation with the Government to make rapid progress on the priority armed groups, through improved cooperation between the Mission, the Government and the FARDC, and with the support of other partners. Neutralizing armed groups goes beyond military operations and will require improved efforts to extend the State's authority and find durable solutions for former combatants.

Thirdly, I count on the Council's support to the Secretary-General's recommendation to draw down an additional 1,700 military personnel. The recommendation takes into account the Mission's plans to transform the force and to take measures to address inefficiencies. Going on the projected capability and efficiency gains that the force transformation will bring, the assessment has been made that we can contemplate a further reduction in MONUSCO's military personnel without compromising the Mission's ability to implement its mandate to protect civilians, including by neutralizing armed groups. As outlined in the Secretary-General's letter of 16 December (S/2015/983) and the report before the Council today, the recommendation should be viewed as a concrete step forward in facilitating the strategic dialogue between the Mission and the Government, with a view to achieving a common goal — a gradual and progressive exit for MONUSCO that preserves the gains and investments made so far.

Fourthly, military pressure will result in a sustainable outcome only if there is an effective, well-planned and nationally led DDR process that ensures that ex-combatants are processed back into their communities or countries of origin, while also ensuring that hazardous war materials are removed and stabilization efforts intensified. The Government has begun planning for the reinsertion and reintegration of thousands of demobilized ex-combatants in their home communities, efforts that should be commended and built on.

(*spoke in French*)

Lastly, it will be important to recognize the progress made by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on ending the recruitment of children into the

armed forces and implementing the national plan aimed at combating sexual violence. I would like to thank the members of the Council and all Member States for their continued active support to MONUSCO. I also want to express my appreciation to the staff of MONUSCO and the United Nations who work in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I thank Mr. Sidikou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Minister Tshibanda N'Tungamulongo.

Mr. Tshibanda N'Tungamulongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to reiterate my congratulations to Angola for its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March 2016. I also wish to reiterate how honoured we are to see the outstanding manner in which the friendly country of Angola is carrying out this task. I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me another opportunity to address the Council at this meeting focusing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish also to take this opportunity to pay well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has worked tirelessly over the past several years towards the restoration of peace in my country. Finally, once again I wish to express the gratitude of the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the efforts undertaken by the United Nations to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and to ensure its peace and stability.

Allow me, before continuing my statement, to condemn, on behalf of the President of the Republic, the Government and the Congolese people, the cowardly terrorist attacks that occurred recently in various places around the world, and in Brussels on 22 March. The Democratic Republic of the Congo extends its condolences to the Belgian Government, the Belgian people and the families and friends of the victims of this friendly country, as well as to those of all the other States affected by this scourge.

We just listened with great interest to the presentation of the report (S/2016/233) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the report (S/2016/232) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, delivered by Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For clarification purposes, allow me to comment on some of the issues addressed in those reports, in particular those related to the progress in the electoral process, the security situation in the eastern part of my country, human rights, the strategic dialogue, including the reduction of the MONUSCO force, and the implementation of the commitments made by my country under the Addis Ababa framework agreement.

With regard to the electoral process, I would like to reaffirm before the Council that my country is committed to the organization of free elections in accordance with international standards of inclusiveness, transparency and credibility. However, my country also wishes to ensure that the elections are not marred by violence — before, during or after. Given the history of our country, the fragility of our institutions, the trauma experienced by our people and the heavy price paid by our economy due to armed conflicts as well as unruly social movements, the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot put a price on peace and stability. They are our first priority. In that respect, and with specific regard to the cause and effect relationship between the elections and violence and instability, I affirm that there is no — not in absolute terms but in the specific context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — empirical evidence that not holding or organizing elections on a given date has been, in itself, the cause of large-scale violence.

However, it should be recalled that, following the political intolerance and non-acceptance of the results by the defeated parties on the occasion of the 2006 and 2011 elections, my country experienced severe violence accompanied by a significant loss of human life and property. To avoid a recurrence of that situation, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, placed the country on the path of political dialogue so that, together, politicians from all sides, civil society, religious and customary authorities could agree on the ways and means to overcome the pitfalls found along the road to peaceful elections and to establish consensus on the current electoral process. There are four major pitfalls.

The first is the lack of a reliable and inclusive electoral register that takes into account all eligible Congolese voters, such as those newly of voting age, Congolese abroad and displaced persons and refugees

who have returned to their place of residence. The organization of sound elections also requires the updating of voter lists, which must necessarily take into account the country's new administrative nomenclature stemming from the creation of new provinces, as well as the issuance of voting cards to all Congolese of voting age.

The second pitfall is the ongoing failure to establish a consensual and realistic timetable. The timetable issued at the time by the National Independent Electoral Commission was rendered non-operational after multiple discordant voices from the political class were heard.

The third pitfall concerns the securing of the electoral process in order to ensure the proper conduct of elections and the role politicians should play in the promotion of an environment that is conducive to a peaceful electoral process.

Finally, the fourth pitfall is the funding of the electoral process.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the invitation to participate in the dialogue among political actors launched by Pope Francis. My Government also welcomes the 16 February communiqué published jointly by the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations, as well as the 24 February appeal by the Secretary-General, each of which insisted on the importance of that dialogue and called on all political actors in the country to fully cooperate with the duly appointed facilitator, former Prime Minister of Togo, Mr. Edem Kodjo, with a view to the consensual and timely preparation and organization of free, transparent and credible elections.

My Government has made considerable efforts in the fight against negative forces and armed groups. As evidenced by paragraph 5 of the report of the Secretary-General, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have led, and continue to conduct, operations against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri (FRPI). The operations will end only when all of those rebel movements have been eradicated.

However, remarkable results have already been recorded. As such, out of the 1,200 FDLR combatants estimated at the beginning of operations, today only 108 elements remain to be neutralized. And, even if we were to add to that figure the few FDLR elements that had once been returned to Rwanda before being recycled and re-injected into our country for the purpose of perpetuating insecurity and plundering the natural resources of our country, we are not facing a force that the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, supported by the United Nations, cannot overcome.

There is no more eloquent testimony on this subject than that of an individual who cannot be suspected of being soft on the matter, namely, the Defence Minister of the Republic of Rwanda, who, on 11 February 2015, in response to a question by an elected representative and member of the Rwandan Parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Security, affirmed that the FDLR was no longer a military threat to Rwanda. That means that even the Rwandan authorities recognize the progress made towards neutralizing that negative force, even if, like them, we think that there is still some work to do.

Equally encouraging results have been seen in the fight against the ADF. Although it, too, has been reduced to a bare minimum, it remains a source of the most grave security concerns because of its established connection with certain Islamic groups and its terrorist actions, which, in just a few months, have led to the death, in atrocious conditions, of more than 500 Congolese men and women in the territory of Beni in North Kivu. Together with the FDLR and the FRPI, it is the main target of the operation that the FARDC will soon undertake with the support of MONUSCO.

I cannot leave this subject without mentioning that the 340 former combatants from the FDLR who had voluntarily surrendered last year, and their dependents, have been confined until today to the transit sites in Kisangani and Kanyabayonga. While thanking the United Nations for taking charge of those former combatants, my Government reiterates that it is the responsibility of the international community to repatriate them to Rwanda, their country of origin, or relocate them to a third country outside the Great Lakes region.

By setting up the National Human Rights Commission, on the one hand, and the Human Rights Liaison Entity, on the other hand, my country wished responsibly to send a strong signal of its steadfast determination to protect the rights of all

its citizens, and even those of foreigners living on our territory, in accordance with national laws and international commitments.

The political space in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the most open of the entire region and it will remain so. Proof of that can be seen with the existence of more than 400 political parties and hundreds of private radio and television channels that freely set their editorial policy, many of which are owned by political actors known to be part of the opposition. Media oversight is constitutionally ensured by the Superior Council of Audiovisual and Communication, a democracy-supporting institution in which representatives from Congolese society in all its diversity sit. Further proof of the openness of the Congolese political space is the undeniable fact that, unlike some countries where being in the opposition means necessarily living outside the country, virtually all Congolese political leaders live in Congo, carry out their political activities, leave and return to the country without any restrictions related to their political opinions.

However, as in any constitutional State where the essential principles are the primacy of law and every citizen's equality before the law, public freedoms must be exercised in accordance with the law and by respecting the requirements of public order. And the State, guarantor of the freedoms and rights of all, has the duty to see to it that this is so, particularly in the light of the adage that states that the rights of one end where those of others begin. An individual's rights and freedoms do not permit him or her to defy with impunity the legal arsenal that protects the rights and safety of all. Therefore, when necessary, courts intervene, acting in an independent manner, to sanction, as in any constitutional State, offences committed.

Membership in the opposition, in the majority, in civil society or in the uniformed military does not release the perpetrator of an ordinary offence from responsibility. For a country like ours, whose population has greatly suffered from the impunity of the privileged due to their status or social standing, to be lenient in this area does not help to strengthen democracy, but rather to derail it. The same goes, necessarily, when serious violations of human rights or crimes against humanity are overlooked.

In response to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's legitimate request to begin the downsizing of MONUSCO, in recognition of the irrefutable progress made together with the United Nations over the past 17 years in terms of re-establishing peace and State authority, as well as in stabilizing the country's institutions, the Council had advocated for setting up a strategic dialogue between the Government and MONUSCO with a view to working together to develop an orderly exit strategy that ensures that the gains made will be preserved. Thanks to MONUSCO's new leadership and the personal recommendations of the Secretary-General, the strategic dialogue between the Government and MONUSCO, which was interrupted in the last quarter of 2015, resumed about a month ago in a constructive spirit.

After a series of meetings at the political level that helped lay the foundations for consensus on the principles and main lines of the exit strategy, a joint working group made up of experts from the Government and MONUSCO met from 9 to 19 March, with the major task of defining objective and realistic criteria for assessing the situation in the geographic areas where MONUSCO personnel are deployed, from the dual perspective of safety and the requirements of stabilization, on the one hand, and the drafting, in a second phase, of a road map for an orderly and gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the other hand. I am pleased to report that, at this stage, the following important results have already been recorded.

First, a withdrawal strategy paper has been drafted and is in the final stages of completion.

Secondly, based on the principles agreed in the paper, the experts completed the first phase of their work by setting forth in a memorandum, signed by the Government and MONUSCO on 21 March, the current deployment arrangement of the MONUSCO contingents region by region, the criteria to be used to evaluate the situation on the ground, the remaining pending threats and challenges, ongoing actions or those expected to be undertaken by the Government to deal with the threats and challenges and, in each case, the specific MONUSCO assistance expected in support of the Government. Specific recommendations permit this joint exercise. I would like to appeal to the Council to make sure that this essential exercise, which it requested and to which the Government is committed in good faith and which is making progress in a satisfactory way in a spirit of trust re-established between the parties, does not remain a dead letter.

With regard to the renewal of the mandate of MONUSCO, which is scheduled to take place at the end of this month, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo hopes that the Council will take into account the progress in the strategic dialogue and the need to maintain between the two parties to the dialogue an environment that is conducive to its continuation, in particular in its next phase, which will be devoted to developing a road map for the orderly and definitive withdrawal of MONUSCO from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would underscore that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is aware of the actions expected of it in order to make the withdrawal irreversible and to accelerate its pace, particularly in terms of security sector reform. Measures are currently being taken so that the three battallions of the rapid reaction force that is being developed within the FARDC, which have already been trained, equipped and successfully deployed on the ground, in particular in the course of operations against the ADF and FDLR, will be further bolstered within a few months by other units, which will make possible the assumption of full responsibility for all needs for securing the eastern part of the country. That is a very ambitious goal, to contribute to creating the concrete conditions that will make possible by the end of this year the withdrawal of half of the MONUSCO contingent currently deployed on our territory without undermining security and the stabilization of the country.

We call on those who continue to oppose the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to look closely at the political and security situation, as well as the required responses, particularly with regard to the role of MONUSCO. The Council has embraced changing the operational concept of the Mission by giving preference to strengthening its capacity for projection rather than simply focusing on the number of personnel. In the spirit of partnership that is supposed to be at the heart of our relationship, we hope, as part of the efforts of the Government to achieve the established goal of reduction, that we can count on the support, without any ulterior agenda, of the members of the Council so that we can, within a reasonable time frame, celebrate together the successful completion of the largest peacekeeping operation in the world.

My country's Government deplores the slowness in the implementation of one of the important provisions of the Nairobi Declarations, namely, the repatriation of ex-combattants of Mouvement du 23-Mars (M-23). The slow pace is due mainly to bad faith on the part of the leadership of the M-23. It should be recalled that, following the military defeat of M-23, those combatants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries fled to Uganda and Rwanda. According to the amnesty law, only those from the Democratic Republic of the Congo are eligible for amnesty. Upon application of the law, 970 citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are former combattants of the M-23 who were not guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity were granted amnesty by the Government. Of that number only 208 were repatriated from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

According to the latest ultimatum, of 15 December 2015, of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for the unconditional repatriation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo of all former Congolese combatants of the M-23 still cantonned in Uganda were rejected by the leadership of the M-23. Only 13 former combatants responded to that appeal and accepted repatriation. That makes a total of 221 former M-23 combattants repatriated from Uganda since December 2014. Based on that, it is possible to assert that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the only signatory country to the Nairobi Declarations that is implementing them. The M-23 former combatants, taken hostage by their leadership, still have not accepted to be part of the repatriation exercise.

My Government therefore believes that the Council should consider sanctions against the M-23 leaders, who are holding the former combattants of the Movement hostage and preventing their repatriation, and hence their social reintegration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with the decision taken in New York on 29 September 2015 by the Heads of States signatories of the framework agreement at the sixth high-level meeting of the Regionl Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. As far as the countries that have hosted the former rebels, it is also very important to put pressure on them to have them meet their commitments and facilitate repatriation.

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing the gratitude of my Government to Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to Mr. Said

Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for their commitment and devotion to the cause of my country and to the Great Lakes region. To all member of the Security Council, I reiterate my country's full recognition and gratitude.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.